

Dated: December 22, 1997.

Bruce Morehead,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 97-33890 Filed 12-23-97; 3:51 pm]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 121797B]

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; Public Hearings

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of public hearings; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) will convene three public hearings on Draft Amendment 6 to the Fishery Management Plan for Stone Crab Resources of the Gulf of Mexico (FMP).

DATES: The public hearings will be held from January 6-8, 1998. See

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION for specific dates and times of the hearings. Written comments on Draft Amendment 6 must be received by January 15, 1998.

ADDRESSES: See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for locations of the hearings. Written comments on Amendment 6 should be sent to the Council at the following address.

Council address: Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 3018 U.S. Highway 301 North, Suite 1000, Tampa, Florida 33619.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Wayne Swingle, Executive Director, 813-228-2815.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Council will hold public hearings on Draft Amendment 6 to the FMP. Amendment 6 would extend the current moratorium on issuance of Federal vessel registrations for the stone crab fishery in the Gulf of Mexico off Florida. The FMP provided that persons could fish commercially in Federal waters if they had either a state stone crab permit or had registered their vessel with NMFS. No one has ever requested a Federal vessel registration.

In 1995, under Amendment 5 to the FMP, the Council placed a moratorium on registration of vessels by NMFS, and the state of Florida, by legislative action, placed a moratorium on the issuance of any additional stone crab permits. The purpose of both actions was to provide

time for the stone crab industry to consider whether a limited access system was needed for the fishery and to develop such a system for implementation by the Florida Legislature. The purpose of the Council action proposed in Draft Amendment 6 is to prohibit registration of vessels for up to an additional 4 years so that the industry, state, and Council have adequate time to develop and implement a limited access system.

Public hearings on Amendment 6 are scheduled as follows, from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

1. Tuesday, January 6, 1998; Regional Service Center County Building, 2796 Overseas Highway (U.S. Highway 1), Marathon, Florida 33050.

2. Wednesday, January 7, 1998; Naples Depot Civic-Cultural Center, 1051 5th Avenue South, Naples, Florida 33940.

3. Thursday, January 8, 1998; Plantation Inn & Gulf Resort, 9301 West Fort Island Trail, Crystal River, Florida 34429.

A copy of Amendment 6 can be obtained by contacting the Council Executive Director (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**).

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Anne Alford at the Council (see **ADDRESSES**) by December 29, 1997.

Dated: December 22, 1997.

Gary C. Matlock,

Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 97-33888 Filed 12-23-97; 3:51 pm]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 122397H]

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) will convene a public meeting.

DATES: The meeting will be held on January 9, 1996, beginning at 9:00 a.m. and conclude at 4:30 p.m.

ADDRESSES: This meeting will be held at the New Orleans Airport Hilton Hotel, 901 Airline Highway, Kenner, LA; telephone: 504-469-5000.

Council address: Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 5401 West Kennedy Boulevard, Suite 331, Tampa, FL 33609.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Antonio B. Lamberte, Economist, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; telephone: 813-228-2815.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Shrimp Advisory Panel (AP) will review scientific information on the cooperative shrimp closure with the state of Texas, royal red shrimp regulatory amendment (tentative) and comparison of shrimp vessel effort and bycatch characterization effort. The AP consists principally of commercial shrimp fishermen, dealers and association representatives. The AP will develop recommendations to the Council regarding the extent of Federal waters off Texas that will be closed in 1996 concurrently with the closure of Texas waters. If Amendment 8 to the Shrimp Fishery Management Plan is approved, the AP will review a regulatory amendment that would provide a procedure for setting a total allowable catch of royal red shrimp. The AP will also develop recommendations regarding the level of effort in the shrimp fishery after reviewing information that compares levels of effort collected using the current method and effort collected from the bycatch characterization study.

Although other issues not contained in this agenda may come before this Council for discussion, in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, those issues may not be the subject of formal Council action during this meeting. Council action will be restricted to those issues specifically identified in the agenda listed in this notice.

Special Accommodations

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Anne Alford at the Council (see **ADDRESSES**) by January 2, 1996.

Dated: December 23, 1997.

Gary C. Matlock,

Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
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